

## Jan/Feb/March 2004 • Volume 4, Issue 1

No matter what event is scheduled during National Salute week, all our veterans will be appreciated and recognized.





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The VAVS newsletter has been created for all volunteers and potential volunteers of VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York. This publication is meant to showcase the wonderful work all of our volunteers contribute to VA. Please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the Advisory or Editorial Boards with your comments, corrections or suggestions.



**Visit Our Network Web Site**  
[www.va.gov/visns/visn02](http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02)

## Director's Message

I hope you had very happy holidays and wish you a very healthy new year! Our Network is looking forward to an exciting new year filled with renovation, expansion and growth. All of which means better access and health care delivery for our patients. I would like to share with you some of those renovations and expansions we have made at each of our Medical Centers to help improve the quality of care and customer service for veterans living in Upstate New York.

At the Syracuse VA, we have just opened a new \$3.8 million Emergency Department (ED). The new ED space is triple the former ED space. The new Syracuse ED has 15 new general examining rooms, 8 cardiac monitored beds and a separate entrance for ambulances to drop off patients who need to be seen in emergency. The new ED is a welcome addition and should provide ease of mind for the 32,000 veterans currently being seen at the Syracuse VA.

At the Buffalo VA, we are pleased to announce that it is was one of 50 VAs in the country to receive funding from Central Office for the construction of a state-of-the-art cardiovascular laboratory. The Buffalo VA was given \$2 million for its new cardiovascular laboratory that will include the most modern equipment available in the world and provide patients with coronary and vascular treatments, angiograms, angioplasties, and stent implants.

The Albany VA is opening both its newly renovated Oncology Suite and its \$2.9 million renovated Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The Oncology Suite

will provide more individualized space and amenities such as televisions for patients, and the ICU will provide more privacy and larger rooms.

Two buildings at the Canandaigua VA have been renovated totaling \$4.5 million and will house the Acute Psychiatry, Long Term Care, Domiciliary and Medically Ill and Chemically Addicted wards.

And we are very excited about the Bath VA turning 125 years old this year! The Bath VA began as a New York State Soldiers and Sailors Home. Its initial funding for its creation was generated through a public appeal initiated by the Grand Army of the Republic in the 1870's. The state facility was turned over to the federal government in 1929. Today the Bath VA specializes in inpatient and outpatient medical services, behavioral health, geriatric, diagnostic and therapeutic care. It serves about 380 inpatients and approximately 12,000 outpatients.

Please help us get the word out to veterans on the facility improvements that are being made at their local VA to improve health care delivery and access.

I want to also say keep up the good work informing veterans of their VA benefits and encouraging them to check out all the benefits they are entitled to receive.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

William F. Feeley  
Network Director





# Volunteer Opportunities

Job descriptions are often available for review in Voluntary Service. Orientation and training is provided.

## Albany

- Ambassador greeter: greet veterans as they arrive by vans, get wheelchairs (if needed), and escort patients to clinic appointments
- Clerical assistance at community based outpatient clinics (Clifton Park, Fonda and Catskill)
- Office assistance in a variety of departments (home care/geriatrics and extended care, patient financial services, accounts receivable, performance management, Saratoga VA National Cemetery, nutrition and food service)
- Craft Kit: distribute arts and craft kits to veterans on medical wards, keep record with patient's name and craft kit taken, provide general assistance with opening package and getting kit started (if needed)
- Hoptel weekend desk clerk: greet and provide orientation to veterans staying in the hoptel guest rooms
- Time study: record monthly wait time studies for several specialty outpatient clinics within the medical center (clinics meet various times and days)

## Bath

- Satisfaction surveys (hospital and Long Term Care Units)
- \*Drivers for Volunteer Transportation Network (Bath/Elmira/Wellsville)
- Home Based Primary Care
- Birthday Program

- Nursing Home (escorts, small group arts and crafts, one-on-one visitations, feeding assistance, and off station trips)
- Women Veteran Mentoring Program
- \*\*Community Visiting/Respite Program
- Information Desk (Tuesdays)
- Computer Lab
- Clerical - multiple
- Historical Museum (seasonal)
- Triage Greeter
- Veterans History Project: help document military stories
  - \* Requires unrestricted license and passing a physical exam
  - \*\* Subject to reference/background check

## Canandaigua

- Companion Therapy
- Special Care Companion Therapy (Palliative Care Ward)
- Reminder phone calls to patients for appointments
- Clerical assistance
- Assisting with recreational activities
- Volunteers needed to provide interaction with dementia clients: orientation, monthly meetings and ongoing training will be provided
- DAV/Volunteer Transportation Network: Transporting veterans to and from their homes for medical appointments
- Performance groups: musical, hobby, performance, etc. to perform for the patients
- Laundry assistance
- Day Treatment Center Wood Shop at 1867 Mt. Hope Ave.

## Syracuse

- Escorts (day shifts)
- DAV van drivers

## Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

- Activity Buddy Program (Nursing Home Care Unit) - Batavia
- Clerical: filing, photocopying, running errands, mailings, paper shredding, etc. - Both sites
- DAV Volunteer Transportation Program: transport veterans to and from clinical appointments - Both sites
- Greeters: welcome veterans and visitors; help them get to appointments and other related areas - Buffalo
- Guest Parking Lot Shuttle: transport veterans and guests from cars and outpatient entrance - Buffalo
- Patient/Ward Visitation(s): assist staff with patient care activities, as well as visit and interact with staff/veterans - Buffalo
- Patient Escort/Transport Service: assist veterans to and from scheduled appointments and other needs - Both sites
- Partial Hospitalization Program (Main and Hertel Site): looking for volunteers with woodworking experience for Wood Shop - Buffalo





## News from...

### Albany

The Albany VA Medical Center was proud to be able to send our Vets of Albany Choir and two dancers to the Creative Arts Festival held October 6 - 13, 2003 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Veterans come together from all over the country for this event. The program focuses on patients' unique talents and abilities. The weeklong festival includes solo and group entries, daily rehearsals for music, dance, and drama that culminates with a gala stage show performance. Veterans exhibit remarkable talent and share their personal stories of challenge and courage. Music therapy and the arts assist patients with relaxation, pain and anxiety management, emotional expression, gait training, developing muscle strength and control, as well as assisting with speech and voice disorders.

Transportation funding for the veterans this year was a challenge. Invitations were not received until July. Thanks to the generous donations from our veteran service organizations, fraternal organizations, volunteers, and the community, we were successful in raising enough funds to send these well-deserving veterans to this special event.

We commend Richard Clark, VAVS Deputy Representative for the Masonic Service Association for spearheading a campaign to get a new

organ for our chapel. Thanks to his efforts, an organ worth \$6,500 was donated to our Chaplain Service.

Voluntary Service received a refreshing and interesting note with some recent donation checks. A World War II veteran and ex-POW was having an 80th birthday party. He asked that in lieu of any gifts to him, donations be made to the Albany VA Medical Center to cover the needs of indigent veterans. Wasn't this a wonderful idea?

Volunteers who missed the annual mandatory safety training exhibits in October can still get credit for the training. Stop by the volunteer office to pick up a booklet and quiz. This refresher course is mandatory for all employees and volunteers.

### Canandaigua

Wow! November and December were busy months for our volunteers in Canandaigua!

Thank you to everyone who supported Canandaigua during the CARES hearing. Thank you to our volunteers and staff who help maintain the beautiful campus and provide exceptional care to our veterans on a daily basis.

The Female Veterans Day Tea was held in November with participation from approximately 60 inpatient, outpatient and employee veterans in the surrounding area.

The American Legion Auxiliary held its annual gift shop where patients

"shop 'til they drop" for their family members. Gifts are wrapped and mailed free of charge for veteran VA participants!

The holiday gift-wrap was held with approximately 80 volunteers (elves) busily preparing gifts for the distribution! VAVS purchased gifts for approximately 750 patients! What a holiday they had!!

Once again, our mitten tree was a success! Lots of beautiful, colorful mittens for children and adults were strung from our tree with care.

The Elks lap robe distribution scheduled for December 14 was cancelled due to inclement weather. But that didn't stop their members! We received many beautiful hand knit quilts and throws for patients!

The holiday gift distribution was held on December 21. Hundreds of volunteers brought in homemade cookies, sang Christmas carols, and handed out gifts to our patients.

MANY individual, organizational and community celebrations were held over the holiday season.

We continue to be thankful to each and every volunteer who took time from their busy schedule to provide our veterans with holiday cheer. Some of our patients do not have family that they can share their holiday season with. Thanks to the volunteers, EVERY patient at Canandaigua was provided "warm wishes for a bright and wonderful holiday season!"







## News from...

### Syracuse

The Syracuse VA Medical Center's "Re-Dedication Event" took place Friday, November 7. The event included:

- A celebration of the Syracuse VA's 50-year affiliation with the State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate Medical University. Its President, Dr. Gregory Eastwood joined Medical Center Director James Cody, State Senator John De Francisco, and Andrew Brobeck representing US Congressmen James Walsh, as guest speakers. A historical marker was unveiled during the ceremony.
- Fort Drum's 10th Mountain Division Band provided the music.
- The formal opening and ribbon cutting of the new \$3.8 million Emergency Department and open house followed.
- This event also included a salute to our local active duty and reserved military units. Representatives of all branches of the service including the army, navy, marine, air force, and coast guard were on hand.
- Voluntary Service provided ushers and refreshments for this activity.



*New Emergency Department ribbon cutting.*

### Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

Tuesday, November 11 began with our traditional Veterans Day observance at the flagpole area of our Batavia site. Each year, veteran service organizations take time to praise veterans who are still with us but also to remember their fallen comrades. The Batavia VA is just one of the facilities where the United Veterans Committee meets and hosts this solemn event (they also gather at the New York State Veterans Home, as well as four other sites throughout the morning).

Also this year, the 4th District of the New York Knights of Columbus took time to remember area veterans by laying a wreath in the Recreation Hall during the annual Veterans Day Social. This event was co-sponsored by Wal-Mart of Batavia, Recreation Therapy Service, and the Volunteer Program Office. In addition, members of the Attica Rod and Gun Club dressed in their military period attire were on hand with area school children to visit with veterans throughout the morning.

Buffalo's afternoon Veterans Day Ceremony was highlighted by an exceptional Veterans Day message by Colonel James B. Roberts, 914th Airlift Wing, Niagara Falls Air Force Reserve Base, Niagara Falls, New York. Colonel Roberts was also applauded for his rendition of the Air Forces' "Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder." A solemn wreath laying, rifle salute, and playing of "Taps" was preceded by a musical salute to veterans by area Akron Girl Scout Troop 1480, as well as the special yellow rose presentation to our female veterans. The formal program was followed by a reception hosted by VAVS and volunteers.

**For News From Bath  
please see story on  
page 8.**





## Wish Lists

Before purchasing any item, please contact Voluntary Service to make sure that the item has not already been purchased/donated. Monetary donations are always accepted.

### Albany

- ❖ Canteen books (for haircuts)
- ❖ Decaf coffee
- ❖ Non-skid slipper socks
- ❖ Afghans
- ❖ Search-a-word activity books
- ❖ Sneakers (mens - all sizes, new only)
- ❖ Denture adhesive
- ❖ Postage stamps
- ❖ CDTA bus tokens
- ❖ Funds to purchase replacement vans for Volunteer Transportation Program and to send patients to Rehabilitative Games

### Bath

- ❖ National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week sponsors
- ❖ Health and comfort items
- ❖ Lab robes and afghans
- ❖ Phone cards
- ❖ Canteen books
- ❖ Items for the Birthday Program (stationary/stamps)
- ❖ Playing cards
- ❖ Board games
- ❖ Socks (white and non-skid)
- ❖ New electric shavers
- ❖ Sponsors/monetary donations for clothing program, holiday events, super bowl parties, Women Veteran Programs and mini stand down events. Sponsors for recreational programs, summer BBQs, ice cream trips, annual Keuka Maid boat trip, and National Golden Age Games
- ❖ Jump Start Program (for veterans transitioning to independent living):

New household items (electric mixers, toasters, pots, pans, dishware, shower curtains, silverware, sheets, blankets, canisters, duffle bags, and suitcases)

### Canandaigua

- ❖ Sponsored luncheons, pizza parties, trips
- ❖ Tickets to sporting events
- ❖ Decaf coffee
- ❖ Styrofoam plates, bowls, cups, napkins and plastic dinnerware
- ❖ Personal care items
- ❖ Funds for Palliative Care rooms; Recreation services; General-purpose account for veteran needs; Storage and maintenance of pontoon boat (\$2,000)
- ❖ Craft items
- ❖ Gift certificates (Wal-Mart, Wegmans, pizza places, McDonalds, Wendy's, movie theatres, etc.)
- ❖ Postage stamps
- ❖ Pool table
- ❖ Sweatpants (L and XL)
- ❖ Canned goods
- ❖ Games (checkers, dominos, chess)
- ❖ Memorabilia/monetary donations for Veteran Heritage Museum
- ❖ Watercolor paints and brushes
- ❖ Black ballpoint pens
- ❖ Restaurant type, stainless steel oven/stove
- ❖ 25 or 27 " television
- ❖ VCR/DVD players
- ❖ Radio/CD players
- ❖ Electric scooters

- ❖ Garden needs: Shed or materials to build and 8' x 8' shed, 2 wheelbarrows and assorted garden tools, 2 each of 2 flowering shrubs with final growth approx. 4' high, 12 Sky Rocket Junipers, assorted plants, 24 climbing vines, 2 garden benches, monetary donations for maintenance, 2 - 200 ft. hose reels and hose

### Syracuse

- ❖ Postage stamps
- ❖ Craft items
- ❖ Talking books/videos
- ❖ Flannel shirts, sweats
- ❖ Mittens/hats/scarves
- ❖ Portable white board
- ❖ Portable podium

### Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

- ❖ Funding for: Patient activities - both sites; Travel (social welfare/patients in need) - Buffalo; Holiday account (Christmas morning gift bags) - Buffalo
- ❖ DAV/Volunteer Transportation Program - both sites
- ❖ Treadmill(s) - both sites
- ❖ Winter clothing (coats, hats, gloves, sweaters) - Buffalo
- ❖ New socks, packaged under garments - Buffalo
- ❖ Coffee Cart program - both sites
- ❖ 9" color television - both sites
- ❖ Patient comfort items - both sites
- ❖ Refreshments for National Salute Programs - both sites





# Calendar of Events

**February 10 - 14****National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week**

Various events and activities at all facilities

## Albany

**January 21** 1:30 p.m.  
**Saratoga Cemetery Support Committee**  
Saratoga

**February 2** 8:30 a.m.  
**Honor a Vet Ceremony**  
Albany County Office Bldg.  
All are invited

**February 18**  
**Craft Show, featuring patients' artwork and crafts**  
Auditorium

**February 18** 1:30 p.m.  
**Saratoga Cemetery Support Committee**  
Saratoga

**February 20** 9:00 a.m.  
**Re-enactment of Iwo Jima**  
Followed by ceremony in main lobby and breakfast in the auditorium

**February 29** 2:30 p.m.  
**Four Chaplains Brotherhood Award Ceremony**  
11th Floor Chapel  
Reception following in the auditorium

**March 1** 8:30 a.m.  
**Honor a Vet Ceremony**  
Albany County Office Bldg.  
All are invited

**March 1** 1:30 p.m.  
**Veterans Holiday Committee Meeting**  
603C

**March 17** 1:30 p.m.  
**Saratoga Cemetery Support Committee**  
Saratoga

## Bath

**January 20** 1:30 p.m.  
**Dr. Martin Luther King Program**  
Union Chapel

**January 25** Contact floor unit for time  
**Super Bowl Party**  
NHCU 2/3/5

**January 31** 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
**Information Session**  
VFW 524, Corning

**March 4** 1:30 p.m.  
**Mardi Gras Party**  
NHCU Dining Room

## Canandaigua

**February 9** 9:30 a.m.  
**Decorating Day**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

**February 11** 1:00 p.m.  
**VAVS**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

**February 12** 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
**Blood Drive**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

**February 13** 10:00 a.m.  
**Valentine Distribution/Ward Visitation**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

**January thru March** 7:00 p.m.  
1st Tuesday of the month  
**Bingo**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium  
Escorts needed

## Syracuse

**February** TBA  
**USO Show and 10th Mountain Division Band events**

**March** TBA  
**United States Air Force Band of Liberty**

**March 10** 10:00 a.m.  
**Creative Arts Contest**  
Auditorium

## Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

**January 21** 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
**American Red Cross Blood Drive**  
Room 301, Buffalo

**February 1** 1:00 p.m.  
**Four Chaplains Service**  
Room 301, Buffalo

**February 13** 1:00 p.m.  
**National Salute To Hospitalized Veterans**  
Open House, Recreation Hall, Batavia  
Room 301, Buffalo 1:30 p.m.

**February 18** 1:30 p.m.  
**VAVS Committee Meeting**  
Auditorium, Batavia

**February 21** 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
**Defensive Driving Course**  
Room 301, Buffalo

**March 17** 1:30 p.m.  
**VAVS Committee Meeting**  
Room 301, Buffalo

**March 18** 10:00 a.m.  
**Veterans Service Officers Meeting**  
Auditorium, Batavia





## Bath Celebrates Milestone

On January 23, 2004, the Bath VA Medical Center marks the 125th anniversary of its grand opening as the Grand Army of the Republic New York State Soldiers and Sailors Home.

Establishing the Bath VA was a long process. In 1863 former governor Edwin Morgan made the first attempt. The State Legislature passed an act for the Soldiers and Sailors Home but the project was abandoned due to lack of interest.

In 1872, a second effort was made, this time by the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Another act was passed, incorporating the New York State Soldiers and Sailors Home to be built and maintained by the state.

Ironically, no funds were appropriated for the project. When considerable time had passed, the GAR made an appeal directly to the public. This

appeal brought in donations totaling \$100,000. Bath was chosen because residents of the community had raised \$23,000 for the project, more than any other single community in the area.

The first cornerstone was laid on June 13, 1877. The first residents of the home, Civil War Veterans, sat down to Christmas dinner in 1878. The grand opening of the facility actually took place on January 23, 1879.

Between 1878 and 1929 the home served wounded combat veterans of New York State. A peak population of 2,143 was reached in 1907 but declined to 192 in 1928 due to increased age and deaths.

The Bath Chamber of Commerce requested that the U.S. Government take responsibility of the home and admit veterans from the Spanish-



American War and World War I, thus opening it up to veterans from outside New York State.

In May 1929, the Home came under the Board of Managers, National Home for Disabled Veteran Soldiers. This federal agency was abolished when the Veterans Administration was established in 1930.

Today, the Bath VA employs 650 and serves over 12,000 veterans through outpatient visits, a 160 bed Nursing Home Care Unit and a 220 bed Domiciliary. The facility is planning numerous events in recognition of this important milestone.



VA Healthcare Network  
Upstate New York  
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Official Business  
Penalty for private use  
\$300

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAL PAID  
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